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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3405

January 3, 2005

The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Madam Secretary:

In light of today's announcements that another cow in Alberta, Canada, has tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), I am writing to ask that you immediately withdraw the rule that you have sent to Congress that would allow the reopening of the border with Canada to the import of live cattle into the U.S.

I know that the news of another case of BSE in Canada is devastating news for the Canadian livestock industry. And all of us sympathize with them, especially given that the Canadian livestock industry has been suffering ever since the discovery of a BSE-infected cow in that country 19 months ago.

But frankly, our first responsibility is to ensure the safety of our food supply and the integrity of the American beef industry. I hope that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will act accordingly.

The new 500-page rule that was issued last week describing Canada as a "minimal risk" country with respect to BSE should be withdrawn immediately and steps that are underway to reopen the border for the import of live cattle from Canada should be suspended.

Three cases of BSE have been discovered in North America, each one of them from a Canadian cow. This most recent discovery comes days after press reports that Canadian officials have discovered numerous instances in which prohibited animal materials were included in animal feed, a violation of Canada's 1997 feed ban.

The administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service said, in defending the decision to reopen the border, that Canada could "detect up to 11 cases of BSE" in the next year and "still be considered a minimal-risk country." Madam Secretary, that guideline is just wrong-headed.

The American livestock industry has suffered substantial economic damages as a result of the discovery of the Canadian cow infected with BSE in Washington State last year. Our export markets have yet to recover.

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To reopen the border now given the news of the additional case of BSE in Canada just makes no sense of all.

I hope you will immediately withdraw the final rule that you released last week.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Byron L. Dorgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Byron" and last name "Dorgan" being the most prominent parts.

Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senator